DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 435 772 UD 033 173

AUTHOR Sigler, Susan
TITLE Decreasing Confrontational Behavior amongst African American Females at an Urban, Non-Traditional Alternative High School.
PUB DATE 1999-04-25
NOTE 74p.; Ed.D. Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Doctoral Dissertations (041)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Aggression; *Behavior Modification; *Behavior Problems; Black Students; *Communication Skills; Conflict Resolution; Educational Environment; *Females; Group Guidance; High School Students; High Schools; Interpersonal Communication; Nontraditional Education; Secondary School Teachers; *Student Behavior; Student Empowerment; Urban Schools; Violence
IDENTIFIERS *African Americans; *Confrontation

ABSTRACT

This applied dissertation was designed to decrease confrontation among African American females at an alternative evening school for high school students who were at least 2 years behind grade level academically. The program involved developing a small group guidance curriculum, creating and videotaping role playing scenarios, arrarging for mentoring of middle school students, developing profile sheets, and organizing teacher inservices to encourage and assist the over-aged high school students in using empowering communication in school on a regular basis. Data collection focused on incident referrals and discipline reports, teacher records and grade reports, conflict mediation logs, and data on dropout and attendance rates. Results indicated that confrontational behavior decreased during the months of implementation. Participating in small group guidance sessions enhanced empowering communication and had a positive impact on school climate and academic instruction. The five appendixes contain: the phenomenal females group profile sheet; the small group guidance curriculum; the student anger scale; teacher inservices; and the teacher perception scale. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 435 772

# Decreasing Confrontational Behavior Amongst African American Females at an Urban, Non-Traditional Alternative High School

by
Susan Sigler
Cluster 83

An Applied Dissertation Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeatern University
1999

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan Sigler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD033473

## Table of Contents


Page

Acknowledgments . . . iii

Abstract . . . iv

Chapter I: Introduction . . . 1
- Description of Community . . . 1
- Writer's Work Setting . . . 1
- Writer's Role . . . 2

Chapter II: Study of the Problem . . . 3
- Problem Statement . . . 3
- Problem Description . . . 3
- Problem Documentation . . . 4
- Causative Analysis . . . 5
- Relationship of the Problem to the Literature . . . 7

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments . . . 11
- Goals and Expectations . . . 11
- Expected Outcomes . . . 11
- Meausrement of Outcomes . . . 12

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy . . . 13
- Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions . . . 13
- Description of Selected Solutions . . . 18
- Report of Action Taken . . . 20

Chapter V: Results . . . 23
- Results . . . 23
- Discussion . . . 36
- Recommendations . . . 39
- Dissemination . . . 40

References . . . 41

Appendices
- A Phenomenal Females Group . . . 45
- B Small Group Guidance Curriculum . . . 47
- C Student Anger Scale . . . 57
- D Teacher Inservices . . . 59
- E Teacher Perception Scale . . . 67

Tables

1 Student Anger Scale . . . . . 26
2 Pre Implementation Teacher Perception Scale . . . . . 33
3 Post Implementation Teacher Perception Scale . . . . . 34

Figures

1 Resolving Conflicts . . . . . 25
2 Class Failures . . . . . 27
3 School Performance . . . . . 28
4 Dropout Rate . . . . . 29
5 Considered Dropping Out . . . . . 30
6 Monthly Attendance . . . . . 31
7 Conflicts Affect Attendance . . . . . 32
8 Phone Logs . . . . . 35

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the administration and faculty of the alternative high school for their cooperation and the advisor for her guidance, diligence, and support. This applied dissertation was written in memory of my aunt, Valeria H. Anderson. Dedication of this report is to my parents who have sacrificed so much so that I may prosper.

Abstract

Decreasing confrontational Behavior Amongst African American Females at an Urban, Non-Traditional Alternative School. Sigler, Susan. M., 1999: Applied Dissertation Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Guidance and Counseling/Anger Management/At-Risk Students/Alternative Education.

This applied dissertation was designed to decrease confrontation at an alternative evening school for students who were at least two years behind grade level academically. Activities such as designing a small group guidance curriculum, creating and videotaping role playing scenarios, mentoring middle school students, developing profile sheets and organizing teacher inservices were implemented to encourage and assist the over aged high school students to use empowering communication in school on a regular basis.

Analysis of the data revealed that confrontational behavior did decrease during the months of implementation. Participating in small group guidance sessions enhanced empowering communication and had a positive impact on school climate and academic instruction.

*****

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do (X) do not ( ) give permission to Nova Southeastern University to distribute copies of this applied dissertation report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova Southeastern University will not charge for dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing materials.

4/25/99
(date)

(signature)

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Description of the Community

The applied dissertation took place in an urban area in the Southeastern part of the United States. Principal aspects of the city's economy were finance, medical services, ship building and repair, tourism, and the military. With an urban population of 256,000, 55.1% of the school population qualified for free and reduced-price lunches.

## Writer's Work Setting

As an urban alternative high school with a low socio-economic level and more than 90% of the students being African American, the alternative high school provided students from the ages of 17-20 to adults (more than 20 years old) an opportunity to return to the educational setting.

The work setting in which the problem occurred provided students who have unusual circumstances to attend high school in a non-traditional (evening) setting. Additionally, the school served all five of the city's public high schools as well as being one of the two night schools which offered adult education.

The mission statement for the school was to ensure that every learner (student, parent, adult, and community member) knew the learner's purpose and gained the strategies that empowered the learner to become successful academically, socially, and personally in a caring, supportive, and challenging learning environment.

The work setting was unique because it was a school of choice. Referrals came from students, parents, counselors, or administrators. Students spent the remainder of their high school careers at the alternative school.

During 1998, the alternative school produced 122 graduates. The school was accredited under the auspice of alternative education.

The high school had 15 part time teachers. Five of these teachers were contracted day school teachers who also worked at the alternative school at night. There were 270 students who attended the school.

The writer's roles and responsibilities as the guidance counselor in relationship to the project were to work cooperatively with students, faculty members, and community members to develop activities and strategies to decrease confrontational and aggressive behavior amongst African American females.

## Chapter II: Study of the Problem

### Problem Statement

The problem that was to be solved at the alternative high school was confrontational and aggressive behavior among African American females. The problem of confrontational and aggressive behavior amongst African American females was a problem in the entire school system. Conflict mediation logs collected by counselor records indicated that 27 conflict mediation sessions were held during the 1997-98 school year as opposed to 9 conflict mediation sessions during the 1996-97 school year, an increase of 67%. The school wanted to decrease the incidences of confrontation and aggressive behavior by 50%. No more than 13 of the 200 African American females were to be referred to conflict mediation sessions.

### Problem Description

Since these females were high school dropouts or potential dropouts, their self esteem was usually low. Additionally, a majority of the females were young mothers. The school lended itself to a strong population of young mothers because of child care issues and the convenience of evening classes. These ingredients mixed for a high rate of aggressive behavior because they felt as if they must compete with the other females. The persons affected by the behavior problem at the alternative school were the students. The confrontational and aggressive behavior impeded their academic pursuits. Additionally, the faculty was also affected by the problem. The behavior caused a disruption in the instructional process. The administrator and the counselor were spending a vast amount of time mediating so other important daily school functions could not be handled

properly because of the disruptions. The confrontational and aggressive behavior problem had not been solved due to limited resources at the school. There was only one administrator and one counselor at the school of high risk and high need students. Additionally, the faculty members, with the exception of the principal, the counselor, and the office manager were not contracted employees so they were only paid for services during school hours. The problem had become a large issue during 1998. Because new students enrolled every nine weeks and the school drew from all neighborhoods in the city, students who may have had a history of confrontation may be in the same school now. With limited control of human resources and enrollment, it was difficult to assist challenging students.

Problem Documentation

Counselor records indicated that conflict mediation sessions for the 1997-98 academic year were up from nine sessions to 27 sessions. Another piece of evidence for the confrontational and aggressive behavior between African American females was an increase in referrals for mutual combat (fighting). According to the school systems' SMART report, discipline referrals involving this population had an increase of 100% with six incidences. Moreover, the problem stalled the academic process. Teacher records and the Computer Technology Department from the Central Office indicated the failure rate for African American females during the 1997-98 school year was 54%. School records were also the source that provided information on the dropout rate of females. The dropout rate for the population during the 1997-98 school year was 53%. The Department of Computer Technology compiled the dropout listings for the

school. The Department of Research, Testing, and Statistics supplied information on attendance along with data collection methods such as teacher records, school logs, and attendance reports. Even though more than 270 students were enrolled at the alternative school, a daily average of attendance was approximately 195 students. School records and monthly attendance records were sources that provided information on attendance.

Causative Analysis

The evidence proved that a problem existed because of the confrontational and aggressive behavior, and the causes of the problem were complex. Investigations determined that one of the causes of the confrontational behavior was that there was no training in place for these students. The strategies used to determine the cause were individual and group counseling sessions with females that had not been involved in the aggressive behavior. There were 18 different females who were asked questions as to why the aggressive behavior was a problem. The fact that these females who were behaving in a confrontational manner may not have known any other way of solving a conflict was consistent and evident when their peers were interviewed during guidance sessions. In the guidance program, behavior was always a topic; however, an in-depth, ongoing group setting had never been established to address solely this topic. Due to the population of the alternative school (dropouts), it was unlikely that they had ever had previous training since they were rarely attending their traditional, home school. The result of the investigation indicated that a lack of social skills was a reason why many of the females were involved in negative behavior.

Another cause of the confrontational and aggressive behavior amongst African

American females was that these females' self-esteem was lower than most high school students since they were dropouts, potential dropouts, and overaged. Individual counseling sessions with females and their scores on a self-concept scale that all alternative school students took, the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale, were the strategies used to determine the self-esteem issues with this population. The Department of Research, Testing, and Statistics scored the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and revealed that 49 out of the 63 females who had been involved in some form of mediation scored low in the area of self esteem. The result of the investigation was that many of the females felt inferior to others, especially other females, and were willing to share this information in individual counseling sessions. Even in a small group counseling sessions, the females admitted to feelings of disappointment in themselves and lack of self-worth.

These females felt desperate and could not see a future for themselves. There was no opportunity for a career awareness program for these females so they did not foresee a future for themselves after graduation. Of the 63 females involved in mediation, 40 females did not know what they were going to do after graduation. Student interviews during individual counseling sessions and counselor logs were strategies that were used to determine the "dead end" philosophy of the students. Only 12 of the African American females had taken advantage of the college and career software in the guidance resource room. During the five opportunities to participate in assemblies which featured career speakers, attendance was less than 20 students overall. Based on interview sessions with the females, most of them felt as if they were important only because they had a child. Of the 63 females who were involved in aggressive behavior, 52 of them were young

mothers and received some form of public assistance.

The disruptive behavior was caused by stress on the part of the females. Conflict mediation session notes proved that all 63 females had some underlying problem besides the other female they confronted. During focus groups and large group sessions, the females freely talked about stress from outside sources such as a fight with their mother or boyfriend, or a sick child with no babysitter. Investigating the problem reported that many of these females had no coping mechanism for handling stress or they could not identify any (or very few) forms of stress relievers. Most of them came from families who handled stress, obstacles, and confrontation through either mental, verbal or physical violence. There were no alternatives to violence that they were familiar with.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The literature on confrontational and aggressive behavior between African American females, at-risk females, and violent behavior brought about various insights into the disruptive behavior problem. One insight into the problem of African American female confrontational behavior was that those females do not have much hope for a successful future in the career world. Brown (1996) stated that black females have a 39.2% unemployment rate as compared to the 13.1% unemployment rate of adolescent white females. Black female high school students set lower standards for occupational goals and had lower expectations of job success than white high school students. These expectations occurred around the 10th grade.

According to Weiler (1997), African American females' unemployment rates were higher than in the past and the female being the head of the household was increasing.

The females were too concerned about their present dilemmas to think about the future. Davis (1990) said that despite a lot of stress and frequency of changes and adjustments and lack of career training, African Americans accepted their role as a care taker at home and had a level of satisfaction in their home situations.

In a study of white, black, and Hispanic women in their interpretation of their dreams, black women perceived themselves to be victims of fate and did not feel as if they had control over their future. Also, they felt that their major responsibility was child care, not school (Kane, 1994).

Another insight into the problem of the aggressive behavior was that schools may not be aware of the African American female culture. African American women were very verbal. Stevens (1997) stated that they tried to assert themselves by using violent acts and abusive language. Grossman, Beinashowitz, Anderson, Sakurai, Finnin, & Flaherty (1992) agreed by saying females were at a greater risk than males. They were more verbal and relied on family cohesion more than males who were more independent.

By being acquainted with one's culture, educators needed to develop strategies to assist members of that culture. Knox (1992) said what was deemed as inappropriate behavior may have been adaptive behavior for the black culture. What were deficient behavior characteristics for one culture may be survival characteristics for another culture.

Again, the behavior problem related back to lower standards and lower self esteem that the females portrayed within themselves. Stevens (1997) said that African American females' self worth was determined based on their male relationships. Their aggressive

behavior warranted respect from peers and adults and one must earn respect from them. It was not automatically given because the other may be an adult or a person in authority.

Females appeared to be more complex than males at least on an emotional level. Wakefield, Smith, DeMorat, Britsch, Hudley, & Cho (1997) stated that boys were perceived as more aggressive but girls used other types of aggression besides physical aggression and they did it at a very young age. Females tended to be passive aggressive.

Females confronted others because they felt challenged and threatened. Haynie, Walters, & Alexander (1997) said the biggest reasons for high risk students fighting were someone embarrassed them, someone flirted with their boyfriend, or some talked behind their backs. Furthermore, Vardi (1992) said levels of assertion and aggression change when adolescent females dealt with different populations such as mothers, boyfriends, school personnel, and community agency personnel. Haynie, Walters, & Alexander (1997) said fights in the school setting usually began in the community outside the realm of the school but were brought into the school from the rising conflict.

These adolescents have had many issues centered around stress and control. Much of the pressure of the entire culture was bestowed on the females. Hall & Bracken (1996) stated that African American parents valued strictness and were highly controlling; therefore, their children became controlling as well as they got older. It was thought that black parents were this way to help their children deal with mainstream, white society.

Additionally, Ward (1995) said African American females had a "take justice into their own hands" attitude because they did not feel as if they had the support of the community. Yee (1990) noted that many black women had the stress of being the

backbone of the family and providing strength and support for the black family.

Many black females felt as if their options were limited by society. Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Vaden (1990) said economic stress had a great impact on a black child's competence in school. Furthermore, stressful life events also affected their parents' role in the schools and served as an explanation for their perceived lack of involvement and lack of monitoring their child's progress. Ollech (1992) said angry adolescents viewed their world as aggressive.

When a student was stressed, a healthy academic environment was difficult. Many times, emotions preceded logic. Dryfoos (1990) stated factors for high risk status showed high correlations for early childbearing, school failure, and delinquency linked with school failure. Jordan, Lara, & McPartland (1994) continued by stating African American females were more likely than any other females to drop out of school because of suspension or expulsion. Also, African Americans as a whole cited family reasons such as taking care of a child or a grandparent. This responsibility usually fell on the female. Dryfoos (1990) found school failure was becoming the highest marker for high risk status for a student.

## Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

### Goals and Expectations

The purpose of the practicum was to develop a program in which African American females confrontational behavior could decrease. Hence, the school climate would be more stable and instruction could peak.

### Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum.

1. An expected outcome was a decrease in conflict mediation sessions. There will be no more than seven conflict mediation sessions involving African American females during the 1998-99 school year.

2. There will be a decrease in discipline referrals. There will be no more than five referrals for mutual combat (fighting) involving African American females.

3. The failure rate of African American females will decrease. The failure rate will decrease by 20% so the failure rate will be no more than 34% with African American females.

4. A decrease in the dropout rate with African American females is an outcome the writer expected. The dropout rate of African American females will decrease by 15% so the dropout rate will not exceed 38%.

5. An expected outcome will be an increase in attendance for African American females. The monthly attendance will increase by at least 5% for this population and will be at least 82% during the months of implementation.

Measurement of Outcomes

1. The outcome which addressed conflict mediation sessions was measured by conflict mediation logs presented on a bar graph. There will be a 75% decrease in conflict mediation sessions.

2. The outcome about discipline referrals was measured by incident referrals and discipline reports presented on a bar graph. The need for discipline referrals will decrease by more than 10%.

3. The third outcome of a decrease in the failure rate with the targeted population will be measured by teacher records and grade reports and will be presented on a bar graph. The failure rate for the 1997-98 school year of 54% will decrease in the 1998-99 school year by 20%.

4. The expected outcome of a decrease in the dropout rate will be measured by the dropout list generated by the Department of Computer Technology at the Central Office and the office manager's records presented by a frequency polygon. The dropout rate for last school year was 53% so it will decrease by 15%.

5. The increase in attendance expected outcome will be measured by attendance figures from daily attendance presented by a frequency polygon. The attendance rate for African American females for the 1997-98 academic year was 77% so it is expected to increase in the 1998-99 school year by 5%.

# Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

## Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem at the alternative school with the African American female population was confrontational and aggressive behavior. As a result of this problem, the females' self esteem and instructional time suffered. Most of the females chose the school because they had responsibilities such as being a young mother and needed evening classes because that was when child care was available to them. They have had academic difficulties since another prerequisite for the school was that students must be two or more years behind academically. These stressors and previous failure led to anger.

These 17-20 year old females needed assistance in coping with their stressors so that the confrontational and aggressive behaviors decreased. The students were capable of success if they got passed these barriers that they themselves created. The school faculty developed a sensitivity to the students' distinct problems within the student's culture.

The topic areas researched for the literature review were at risk students, African American females, aggressive behavior, mentoring and violence prevention programs. A solution generated from reviewing the literature was developing a curriculum. Ollech (1992) stated interventions which are effective with angry adolescents are social skills training, interpersonal problem solving, and ways of controlling and reducing stimuli.

With a curriculum in place, these students had the intense, small group attention that was needed to teach alternative methods to violence. The curriculum helped these students become aware and identify these behaviors before acting on them.

Additionally, this curriculum could be used in any high school that may have a similar problem and population. Most high schools had this problem, but probably not with the intensity of the problem that the alternative school had. Cotten, Resnick, Browne, Martin, McCarraher, & Woods (1994) said students may not think that violent behavior was the best solution to a conflict but it was the only solution they know, a solution prevalent in the home, and they may not know other ways of solving the problem.

Farrell & Bruce (1997) suggested that a school-based violence prevention program for girls need not have a core curriculum on physical aggression (which may be appropriate for boys). The girls need a curriculum based on indirect aggression. A more practical curriculum for females would have components which address issues such as spreading rumors, talking behind someone's back, or seeking revenge on another girl for jealousy purposes.

Females have distinct and different needs from males; hence, a separate curriculum needed to be developed for them. A curriculum which will be used by the counselor will enable these females to discuss and resolve violence issues in a safe environment. Stevens (1997) said a violence prevention program or curriculum should emphasize self-image and role mentoring and be sensitive to cultural identity. St. George & Thomas (1997) stated that violence prevention programs needed to focus on perceptions of violence from a viewpoint of family and community.

Another solution was to go out in the community once the curriculum had been implemented. After the high school African American females were exposed to alternatives to violence, they mentored and helped middle school and elementary school

students where the curriculum was most needed because the positive behaviors were taught earlier in the lives of these younger students. Additionally, peer counseling was often more effective than school counseling. Clark, Beckett, Well, & Dungee-Anderson (1994) said a curriculum for school prevention programs needed to know the culture of the populations; therefore, a peer counseling component was essential.

At least three times during the implementation of the practicum, the counselor and the females visited a community center in a public housing project and gave a one day seminar to elementary and middle school students and their parents or guardians on violence prevention. Fink (1990) stated that communication involved human social, psychological, and cultural development.

The community center seminars enabled the high school students to have a level of self-worth while assisting other students and parents in a non-threatening environment, their own environment. In "Accepting community responsibility for african american youth education and socialization" (1992), the solution to a violence prevention program needed to be implemented in the schools but it was actually a total community effort. Health care agencies, human service agencies, low enforcement, and the media were to be involved. According to Dryfoos (1990), disadvantaged students needed school environments which encouraged the students' interest in a small setting. Then, students took their knowledge into the community.

A solution to the confrontational behavior problem not only involved the elementary and middle school students in mentoring but the high school students as well. Mentoring was widely available within the school, but the students needed to know what happened

after they graduated. Many of these females displayed violent and negative behavior because they failed to realize their options or their future. Violence was a desperate measure for a desperate population. Bieri & Bingham (1994) stated a career awareness choices' curriculum will enhance female self-esteem.

The African American females needed to know they had opportunities, choices, and goals. Most of them only thought about cosmetology as a career because that was all they knew and that field was highly competitive especially among this population. The counselor planned to implement BANK DAY. This project was to be a few days in which these females could job shadow different banking personnel. This experience enabled them to explore another career field they may not be familiar with or aware of. Additionally, the females used the guidance software to do career exploration in individual and small group sessions. According to Brown (1996), black females felt as if they had limited control over their job prospects and opportunities. Career awareness mentoring decreased the confrontational behavior because this population had a vision and a goal to work toward. They were responsible for writing an essay about their experiences.

A solution to the violence problem was to train teachers on identifying potentially hostile situations and to be sensitive to their surroundings when interacting with this population of females. Rotheram-Borus & Wyche (1994) said teachers should receive inservices and other forms of training so that ethnic identity could be incorporated into the curriculum.

The training enhanced the relationship between the student and the teacher in the

classroom. Everyone benefitted. The teacher had an underlying explanation as to why these females acted disruptively in class and the students felt as if the teacher was caring and nurturing and was paying attention to events in their world. Cothran & Ennis (1997) stated teachers needed a culturally diverse curriculum. If students visualized their backgrounds, values, and relevance to their future, they were more willing to comply.

At least four times during implementation, the counselor held inservices for teachers giving them information, strategies, and literature about these African American females to assist them in building a bond with these students. The discipline problems in the class decreased as a result of this teamwork and the extra effort from the teachers to get to know their students on a deeper level. According to "Is youth violence just another fact of life? Some kids resilient: Some kids at risk. Clarifying the debate: Psychology examines the issues" (1996), the most important part of developing a program for students was to include a variety of components of the student's environment. Brantlinger (1995) said blacks may have an "I don't care" attitude as a defense mechanism in the classroom for what they thought would be rejection from a teacher whom they felt knew nothing about who they really were.

Results generated by reviewing the literature included developing a curriculum for the African American females. The curriculum did not entail changing their values just their actions because there was a fine line between aggression and assertion. The curriculum emphasizing social skills allowed for personal growth and an increase in self-esteem. Vardi (1992) suggested that with females, role playing was the intervention that works best in the group setting. The counselor developed a curriculum that was

implemented in the alternative school as well as the other five high schools in the school system. Resilient students were motivated toward goal attainment and returning to school because of a specific experience which emphasized the importance of schooling (Westfall & Pisapia, 1994).

Additionally, the high school females then guided middle school students at their schools focusing on interventions within the curriculum. Fodor (1992) said aggressiveness was viewed as inappropriate, assertive behavior. It was attacking and accusing and disrupted the school climate.

The teacher training component was a valuable part of the social skills' curriculum since the guidance counselor was not always available if a hostile environment erupted in the classroom. An important underlying purpose of the teacher training and curriculum implementation was to create a positive school climate in which instruction flourished. Students tried to control classroom settings because they knew teachers needed their cooperation. Students tried to alter the class focus by acting in a disruptive manner either by not participating or by acting as the vocal leader with other students often rallying around these opinionated students (Cothran & Ennis, 1997). The teacher training assisted teachers in identifying such situations and interventions and strategies to create a win-win situation in the classroom instead of a power struggle between the students and the teacher.

Description of Selected Solutions

The solutions the counselor planned to implement were the confrontational behavior curriculum for African American females, the business mentoring through the vehicle of

BANK DAY, the community center mentoring with elementary and middle school mentoring, and the teacher training on aggressive and confrontational behavior as well as power struggles within the classroom environment between students and teachers.

Moreover, the solution of the curriculum development was justified because it gave the females positive attention and opportunities for cultural and moral development. In the spring of 1999, BANK DAY was implemented for these African American females to job shadow and write an essay about the experience. Funds were raised so that English teachers judged the essays in a contest format and the three females with the highest marks received a gift certificate. At least three or four times during the 1998-99 school year, the counselor and the students visited three to four different community centers within the public housing neighborhoods to hold a seminar on confrontational and aggressive behavior for elementary and middle school students. Other high school students were involved in the curriculum at their home school since all high school counselors had a copy of the curriculum.

The solution strategies and the projected outcomes were directly correlated. The strategies allowed high risk, African American females to have a sense of control and handle some of the daily stress and pressures of their lives while teaching them coping mechanism and positive self image.

Finally, the counselor's leadership role during implementation was accomplished by keeping a daily log and collecting and analyzing data from interviews, small group sessions, surveys, teacher perception scales, and focus groups. Developing the Empowering Communication Curriculum and teacher training inservices

were other areas of leadership. The counselor was responsible for coordinating and publicizing the mentoring to take place at the community centers.

Report of Action Taken

Creating a curriculum was the first strategy and solution to the problem of confrontational behavior. The curriculum was dispersed to all the high schools in the district. Several middle schools inquired about obtaining a copy of the curriculum. The first group session included the issue of self empowerment and had the students finding a strength they had and complemented themselves on that strength. The African American females were required to keep an empowerment journal that contained daily stress relievers that helped them to cope with everyday worries. The journal they wrote centered around something the females did well on a specific day or areas in their lives wherein they thought they needed to improve. Self reflection activities such as the journals enabled the females to discuss relationship pitfalls they encountered with boyfriends, family members, and friends. The final group meetings were intense since the females began role playing activities and scenario building. Various scenarios were addressed and the females had to respond to them. The last session of each six session group involved the students creating a videotaped scenario of a conflict which was resolved with empowering communication instead of confrontational behavior. These videotaped "skits" were later shown to other female students and to middle school mentees.

The female students who had participated in the six session small group counseling sessions were invited to mentor middle school students. The mentoring occurred in three

different schools. The high school students showed the videos, discussed "stress buster" cards, and communicated the difference between confrontational and empowering communication. The stress buster cards were part of a session which involved writing ways in which individuals relieved stress. Enough cards were made to develop a weekly calendar of stress relievers.

Another strategy involved having college students from a local university commit to service learning. The writer met with two professors from this university during the summer to organize an agreement between the high school and the university. There were four undergraduate students who were taking a career counseling class at the university performed 20 hours of service learning per undergraduate student. Each undergraduate student worked with the high school African American females individually on career exploration and in small group sessions on career information. The effort replaced the plans for BANK DAY that were never fully developed due to lack of support from the organizer of the BANK DAY program.

A final tactic for combating the problem of confrontational behavior was to write profile sheets describing interests of new enrollees each quarter. The writer called new students who were enrolling in the school and asked them questions about their lives and their future plans. Then, the writer copied the profile sheets and gave one to each of the new student's teachers so the teachers would be familiar with the new student before that student entered their classes for the first time. Students appreciated the time and effort the school officials took to initiate such a system for getting the students acquainted to a new school.

Teachers were inserviced on needs and behaviors of the population, African American females. The inservices provided the teachers a review of the literature involving student - teacher power struggles, ethnic differences, and gender differences. A discussion was ignited and strategies were given to teachers concerning instructional problems when a student tried to control the pace of the lesson and other disruptions which could be avoided. Another inservice addressed differences between this population and other women from other races. The purpose of the training was to probe how some African American females perceive themselves and their attitudes about themselves in comparison to self perceptions of females from other cultures. Another teacher training session involved how males and females process information differently. All the inservices had a sound instructional tone. The last teacher inservice was dedicated to instructional strategies for at risk learners. The teacher inservices made the teachers aware of situations that occurred in their classrooms everyday and how those situations were best handled so that instructional time was optimal.

# Chapter V: Results

## Results

The problem to be solved in this dissertation was confrontational behavior amongst African American females at the alternative high school.

The major solution strategy used was the creation and implementation of a small group guidance curriculum which addressed empowering communication. Students were involved in a six session, six week group with different lessons each week ranging from role playing scenarios of confrontation and empowering communication to discussing pitfalls in relationships. Of the 64 students who participated in one of the seven different groups, only one student declined to continue to actively participate in group processes. There were 45 small group guidance sessions held including three sessions that occurred at other schools with members of that school's female population integrating with the alternative school's participants.

Other solution strategies included mentoring at middle schools and having college students serve as career information mentors. Of the Phenomenal Females group, the title of the small group sessions and group membership, 24 were mentored on career exploration and information by the college undergraduates. Using profile sheets to introduce new students to the school was another strategy to combat the confrontational behavior. New students participating in the group totaled 24. The other 40 group members were females who attended the school the previous school year.

A final strategy to decrease confrontational behavior was having teacher inservices which involved techniques on how to identify pontential power struggles in the

classroom between teachers and students and addressed the specific needs of this particular population.

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a program in which African American females' confrontational behavior could decrease. Hence, the school climate would be more stable and instruction could peak.

The following outcomes were projected for this dissertation.

1. An expected outcome was a decrease in conflict mediation sessions. There would be no more than seven conflict mediation sessions involving African American females during the 1998-99 school year.

This outcome was met.

There were two conflict mediation sessions during the eight month implementation period. Of the 64 females involved in the Phenomenal Females group, 10 had never experienced confrontation or had been involved in a conflict mediation session. The Profile Sheets (see Appendix A) enabled teachers to become familiar with students before they ever entered the school building to attend classes. The Phenomenal Females guidance curriculum (see Appendix B) had a session which focused on role playing mediation sessions.

The Student Anger Scale (see Appendix C), question seven, indicated that 39% of the females said they tried to resolve conflicts without being confrontational a few times and 20% of the 64 females said they tried empowering communication many times. Only 19% of the group participants said they have never tried to resolve conflicts without either verbal or physical confrontation (see Figure 1).

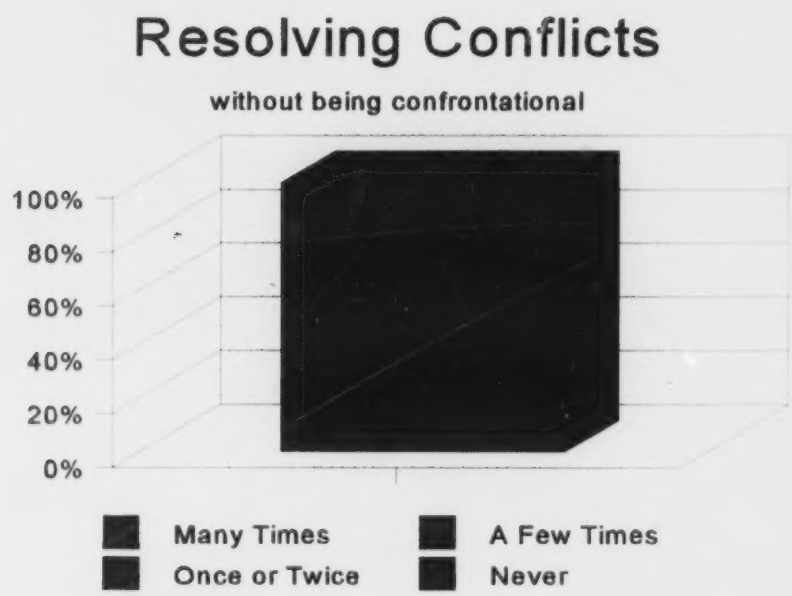


Figure 1. Survey question 7 from Student Anger Scale.

2. There would be a decrease in discipline referrals. There would be no more than five referrals of mutual combat (fighting) involving African American females.

This outcome was met.

During the 1998-99 school year, there were no referrals for fighting amongst African American females. In the Student Anger Scale, question five addressed physical confrontation with another female and question six addressed physical confrontation with a boyfriend. A total of 46 or 72% of the females had experiences with physical confrontations with other females. A total of 39 or 61% of the females had been engaged in a physical conflict with a boyfriend at least once or twice (see Table 1).

Table 1

Student Anger Scale Survey Results

| Question | Never | Once or Twice | A Few Times | Many Times |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Boyfriend | 23% | 23% | 20% | 34% |
| 2. Talked About | 22% | 34% | 27% | 17% |
| 3. Rumors | 34% | 42% | 16% | 8% |
| 4. Another Female | 38% | 36% | 17% | 9% |
| 5. Physical - Female | 28% | 47% | 14% | 11% |
| 6. Physical - Male | 38% | 25% | 8% | 29% |
| 7. Resolve Conflict | 19% | 22% | 39% | 20% |
| 8. Performance | 36% | 27% | 20% | 17% |
| 9. Attendance | 38% | 31% | 17% | 14% |
| 10. Dropping Out | 34% | 22% | 17% | 27% |

Note. n = 64.

All 64 African American females participated in the Student Anger Scale (see Appendix C). The teacher inservices (see Appendix D) which occurred once per quarter for a total of four had components on how teachers could trouble-shoot escalating conflicts in their

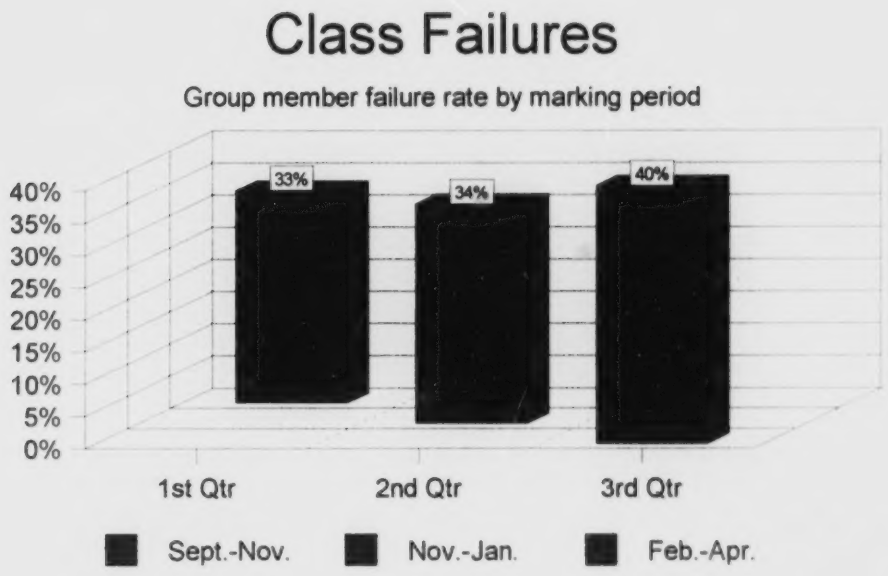


Figure 2. Failure rate for each of the grading periods.

classrooms before the conflicts could become confrontational and aggressive.

3. The failure rate of African American females would decrease. The failure rate would decrease by 20% so the failure rate would be no more than 34% with African American females.

This outcome was not met.

For the first quarter grading period, the failure rate was 33%. The second quarter grading period failure rate was 34%. The third quarter failure rate was 40%. The percentages were based on individual students involved in the group guidance curriculum. If a student failed one class, the student was tallied as a failure.

Therefore, the failure rate was determined based on the individual, not by the classes the students failed. One class failure would make a total failure for that grading period. The failure rate by quarters, nine week grading period (see Figure 2), showed that the final quarter was the grading period in which the outcome was not met. This was also the quarter wherein the least amount of group sessions were held.

Question 8 on the Student Anger Scale addressed the issue of school performance and failures. Of the Phenomenal Females group participants, 64% of the females said

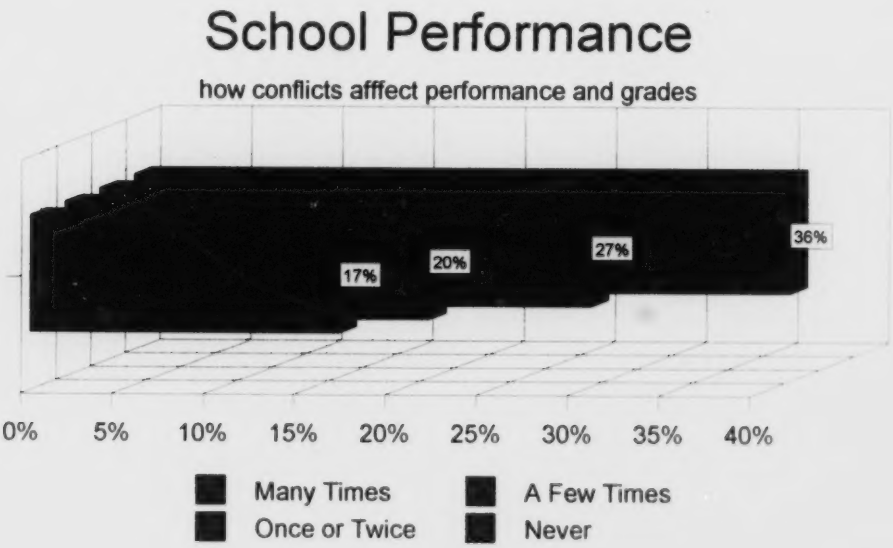


Figure 3. Survey question 8 from Student Anger Scale.

that a conflict affected their school performance at least once during their schooling (see Figure 3).

4. A decrease in the dropout rate with African American females was an outcome the writer expected. The dropout rate of African American females would decrease by 15%

so the dropout rate would not exceed 38%.

This outcome was met.

The dropout rate was the outcome that showed the most significant improvement

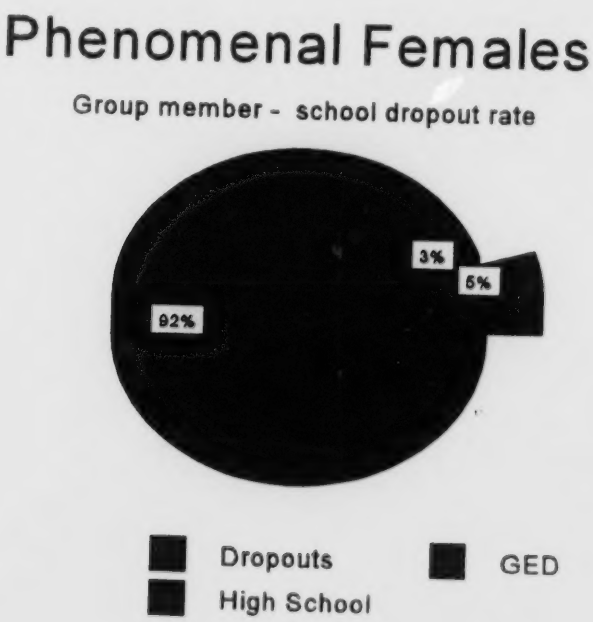


Figure 4. The high school dropout rate from the females was 8% during implementation.

from last year's data. The dropout rate for these students was 8%. Of the females who were enrolled at the school during the 1997-98 school year, 40 Phenomenal Females, 53% were dropouts last year. This data decreased by 45% during the school year 1998-99. There was a total of five students who dropped out of school. Out of those students, three were later retrieved and entered the GED program (see Figure 4).

According to the student responses on the Student Anger Scale, question 10, 34% of

the females said they never considered dropping out of school because of a stressful or

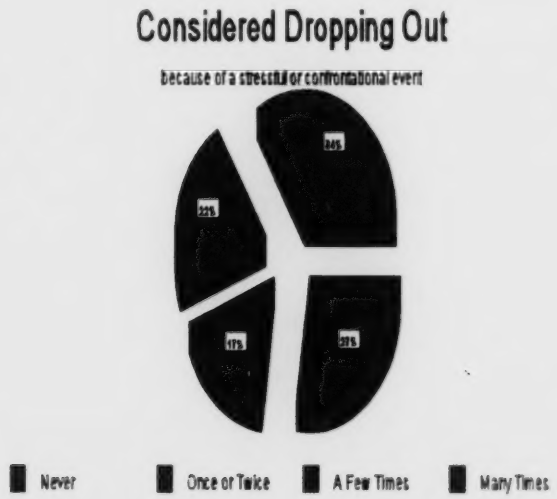


Figure 5. Survey question 10 from Student Anger Scale.

confrontational event. Once or Twice was the repsonse of 22%, 17% stated A Few Times, and 27% said they considered dropping out of school because of a confrontational situation (see Figure 5).

5. An expected outcome was an increase in attendance for African American females. The monthly attendance would increase by at least 5% for this population and will be at least 82% during the months of implementation.

This outcome was not met. Attendance was 85% or greater for every month with the exception of January, 80%; therefore, the expected outcome was not met. September attendance was 92% then the attendance for the next two months was 96%.

Attendance decreased during December, 85% and January. February and March's attendance were both steady at 93%, so the rebound in attendance was promising (see Figure 6).

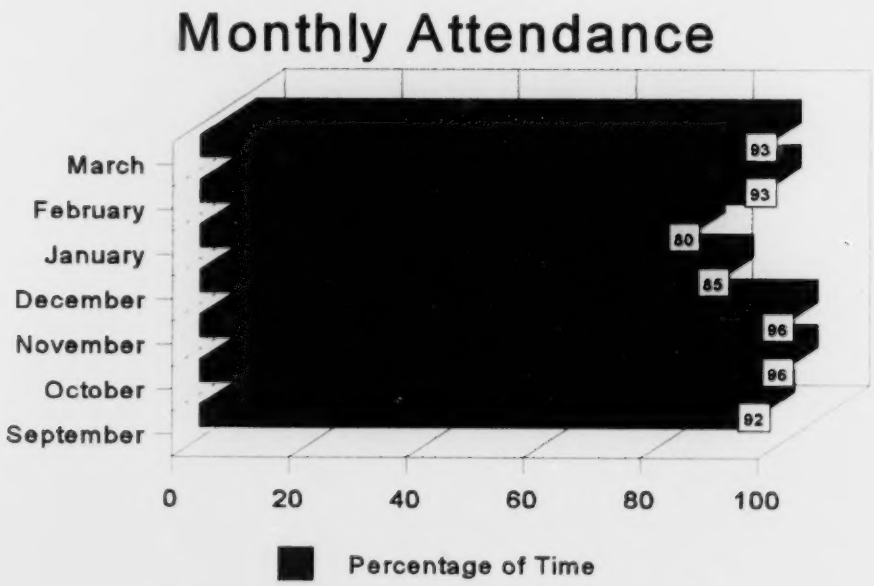


Figure 6. Attendance during most of the implementation months.

Attendance for the African American females for the month of April will not be part of the dissertation data because implementation only occurred for part of the month. It would not be sound to compare April's attendance with the other full months' attendance records.

When the females responded to the Student Anger Scale, 31% said that a confrontation or conflict affected their school attendance with frequency, a few or many

times (see Figure 7).

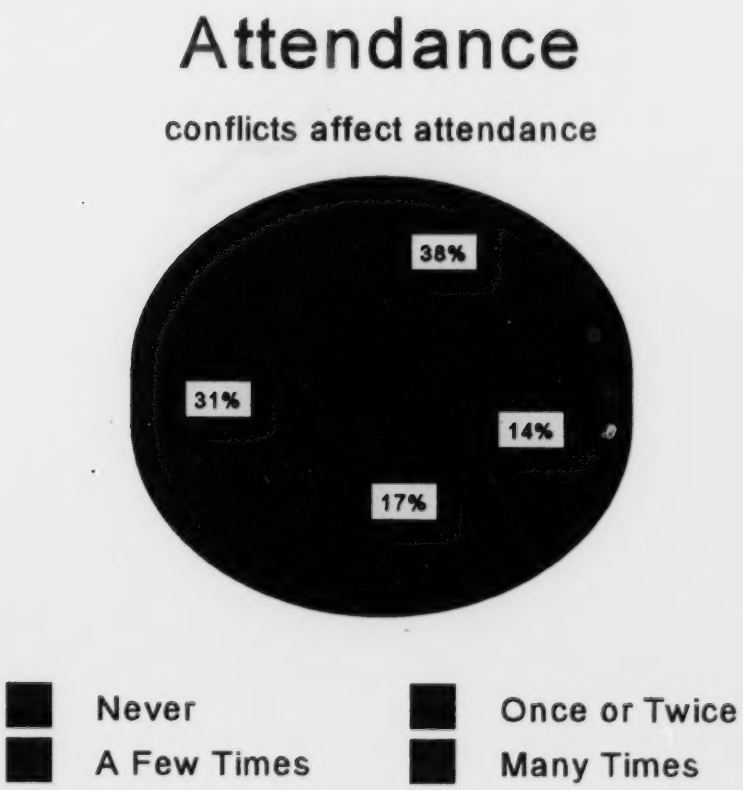


Figure 7. Survey question 9 from Student Anger Scale.

This data holds true since attendance increased during implementation with the exception of one month. Just as the females were questioned about how conflicts affected their attendance, teachers were also asked in the Teacher Perception Scale (see Appendix E) what impact

social dilemmas had on student attendance. The Pre Implementation Teacher Perception Scale stated that 75% of the teachers agreed that attendance was related to social issues. The teachers either strongly agreed, 40% or agreed 35%, that student attendance was affected by the students' social concerns (see Table 2).

Table 2

Pre Implementation Teacher Perception Scale

| Question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. More Difficult | 20% | 15% | 15% | 45% | 5% |
| 2. Resist Authority | 5% | 25% | 25% | 35% | 10% |
| 3. Interfere | 35% | 40% | 15% | 10% | 0% |
| 4. Disruptions | 15% | 35% | 25% | 20% | 5% |
| 5. Stress | 10% | 35% | 20% | 30% | 5% |
| 6. Female Difficulty | 20% | 10% | 10% | 55% | 5% |
| 7. Verbal Aggression | 10% | 60% | 10% | 15% | 5% |
| 8. Instruction | 40% | 30% | 5% | 20% | 5% |
| 9. Social Dilemmas | 40% | 35% | 15% | 10% | 0% |
| 10. School Climate | 35% | 25% | 20% | 20% | 0% |

Note. =20.

Table 3

Post Implementation Teacher Perception Scale

| Question | Strongly Agree | Agree | Not Sure | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. More Difficult | 10% | 10% | 5% | 45% | 30% |
| 2. Resist Authority | 15% | 25% | 15% | 30% | 15% |
| 3. Interfere | 35% | 50% | 5% | 10% | 0% |
| 4. Disruptions | 10% | 25% | 15% | 45% | 10% |
| 5. Stress | 20% | 35% | 30% | 10% | 5% |
| 6. Female Difficulty | 0% | 15% | 15% | 40% | 30% |
| 7. Verbal Aggression | 15% | 55% | 10% | 15% | 5% |
| 8. Instruction | 25% | 55% | 10% | 5% | 5% |
| 9. Social Dilemmas | 30% | 65% | 5% | 0% | 0% |
| 10. School Climate | 25% | 40% | 15% | 20% | 0% |

Note. n = 20.

Yet, when the teachers responded after the implementation of the guidance curriculum, 95% of the teachers agreed to a degree that social ills affected student attendance, 30% strongly agreed and 65% agreed. Question 9 on the Post Implementation Teacher

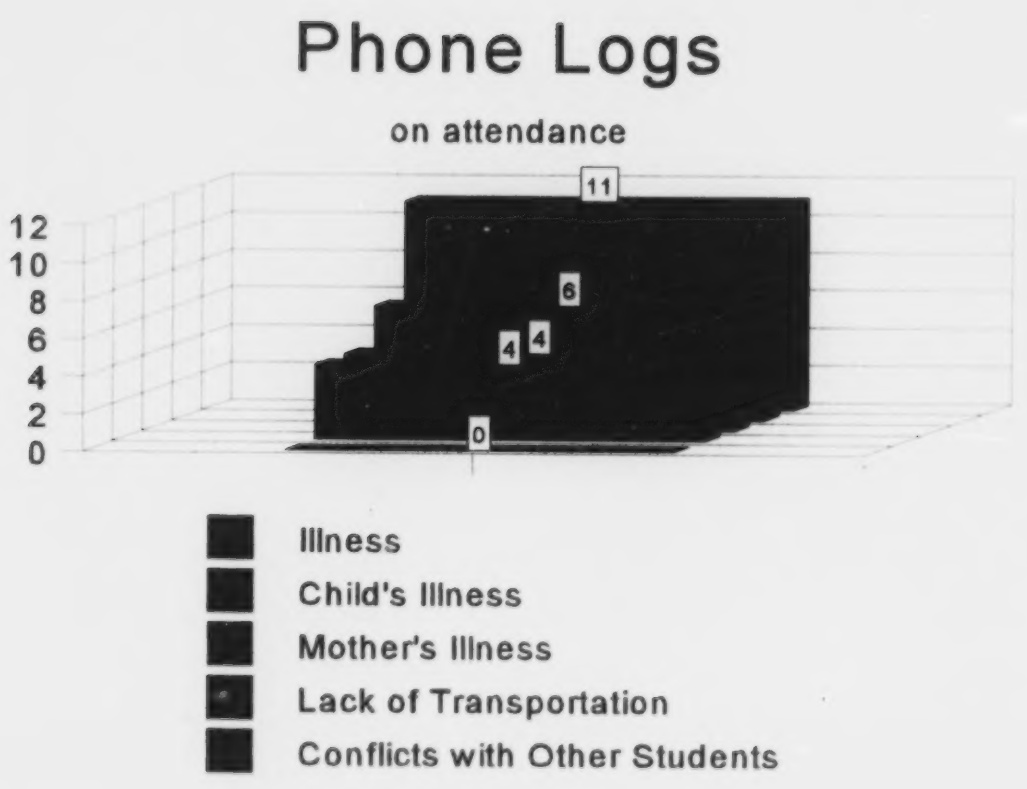


Figure 8. Phone contacts made about consecutive absences.

Perception Scale (see Table 3) showed a significant difference in the question about attendance.

When phone contacts were made inquiring about student attendance, no student said she was absent because of a conflict. Phone Logs indicated that 11 females said they were absent because they were sick and six stated that their child was ill. Transportation affected four females' attendance and a Phenomenal Females' mother illness was a

reason for four students to be absent from school for more than two consecutive days (see Figure 8).

Discussion

During the eight-month implementation process, significant gains were introduced. An area which showed significant positive growth was the conflict mediation sessions, the first outcome. This outcome was met. They were greatly reduced from the 27 sessions from the previous year to two conflict mediation sessions during the 1998-99 school year. It is suggested that a contributing factor for the decrease in conflict mediation sessions was the fact that the small group sessions began the second week after the school year begun. Prevention occurred early in the school year. Additionally, the Profile Sheets (see Appendix A) allowed the school to become engaged with the new students before they actually attended the alternative school. Throughout the small group guidance curriculum, empowering communication and mediation was a focus.

The second outcome was met. There were no discipline referrals for the school year for mutual combat. The outcome could have occurred because of the interventions with the guidance office. Also, the teacher inservices may have brought an awareness of the teachers to notice potential conflicts before the confrontation took place. The Student Anger Scale (see Appendix C) proved that these students were familiar and had experiences with physical confrontations since questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 all related to confrontational experiences. Only 28% of the African American females said they had never had another female become physically aggressive. This was question 5 on the Student Anger Scale. Obviously, the activities had impacted their behavior in a positive

way. The mentoring sessions with middle school students suggested that the high school students thought of themselves as role models. These were all factors in the decrease in discipline referrals.

School climate was enhanced because of the decrease in disruptions. Questions eight and 10 on the Teacher Perception Scale addressed the impact that confrontational behavior had on instruction and climate. Addtionally, a higher percentage agreed after implementation as stated on the Post Implementation Teacher Perception Scale. Question eight asked the teachers to respond if female confrontational behavior impeded instruction. On the Pre Implementation scale, 30% agreed. On the Post Implementation scale, 55% agreed. Question 10 on the scale asked if school climate was affected by female confrontational behavior. Before implementation, 35% strongly agreed with this statement. After implementation, 25% strongly agreed that school climate was affected by confrontational behavior. Teachers agreed that school climate and confrontation showed a correlation with 25% of the teachers agreeing previous to implementation and 40% agreeing after the activities and solutions were performed.

The most staggering data that resulted from implementation was the third outcome. This outcome was not met. The failure rate per grading period was similar to the expected outcome for two grading periods. However, during the final grading period, the failure rate increased significantly. The reasons were unexplainable. As the Phenomenal Females group grew, one would expect significant gains in progress with the population. Gains were the result in many areas such as attendance and dropout rate. A rise in failure rates could be the result of a decrease in attendance yet attendance was strong, 93%

during the months of the grading period. There were no incidences of confrontation during the third marking period. The only plausible suggestion could be the way in which the failure rate was tallied in that one class failure was counted as a failure rate for that student, whether the student failed one class or all four classes. But the same process was used to tally the previous year's failure rate.

The fourth outcome was met. The dropout rate decreased 45% from the previous year. Most of the population were students at the school last year, 40 out of 64 students. Additionally, 3% of the 8% total dropouts were later retrieved into the GED program at the school. This data showed the impact the solution strategies had on the African American females. It was staggering that so few females dropped out considering all the unknown variables that are dealt with. For example, child care and child illness were some of the reasons why the females said they were absent and these were the same reasons why they might have to drop out of school (see Figure 8). A good percentage, 34%, said they never considered dropping out of school because of a confrontation according to question 10 on the Student Anger Scale (see Figure 5). Such a decrease in the dropout rate suggested that the curriculum and activites such as Phenomenal Female of the Week were worthy solutions to the problem of confrontational behavior.

Though the outcome was not met, the attendance goal, the fifth outcome, was better than expected for each month with the exception of January. Attendance was lower than the other implementation months during December and January (see Figure 6). However, these two months were traditionally poor attendance months in any school due to the holidays.

It was interesting that the students responded that conflicts and social issues did not have a great effect on their attendance (see Figure 7). Yet, teachers said in question 9 on the Teacher Perception Scale (see Appendix E) that they believed student attendance was affected by their social concerns (see Table 2). After implementation of the curriculum and the inservices, teachers chose the responses strongly agree and agree more than prior to implementation that student attendance was impacted because of social problems (see Table 3).

The data for that question on the scale may have suggested that teachers became aware of either attendance concerns or the students' social concerns both of which were stressed during the teacher inservices.

Phone logs indicated that perhaps the students and the data were correct, conflicts did not interfere with student attendance. Other concerns such as family illness were more prominent than confrontations with other female students (see Figure 8).

The results would suggest that problems such as the failure rate, the attendance, and the dropout rate were not the result of conflicts with other females. The African American females had experiences with confrontation. At one time in their experiences, confrontation did have an effect on these same problems for the females as indicated in the results of the Student Anger Scale and the Post Implementation Teacher Perception Scale (see Table 3).

Recommendations

Several recommendations could be made for educators making decisions on similar issues on behavior.

1. A different target population should be used if this problem were to be duplicated. Comparing females from two different ethnic areas would have increased the validity of the dissertation. The comparision was not possible in the work setting in which the problem and solution strategies were implemented because other ethnic populations were small in number.

2. Another similar recommendation would be that the problem and activities should have been implemented in a setting that offered more diversity amongst the population so that more than 64 students could have participated. It would have broadened the scope and had a greater significance of the work that was accomplished.

Dissemination

The findings were interesting. Many middle school administrators were interested in the mentoring of middle school students becoming a weekly event. Additionally, the videotape of the last small group session for each of the seven groups was shown to a group of aspiring counselors and a copy of the curriculum was given to them. The curriculum became a portion of various training sessions for counselors on how to run a small group counseling session for school counselors.

Moreover, there were two opportunities to present the material in this dissertation during implementation. Plans were not followed on both occasions because of schedule conflicts. The writer plans to present the material at a conference during the summer of 1999 when the data collection has been completed.

**References**

(1992). Accepting community responsibility for african american youth education and socialization. Journal of Negro Education, 61, 451-454.

Bieri, K.G., & Bingham, M. (1994). A working curriculum for gender roles. In S.L. Archer (Ed.), Interventions For Adolescent Identity Development (pp.141-154). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Brantlinger, E. (1995). Social class in schools: Student's perspectives. Phi Delta Kappa - Center for Evaluation, Development, and Research - Research Bulletin, 14, 1-3.

Brown, S.P. (1996). Balck female adolescents' career aspirations and expectations: Rising to the challenge of the american occupational structure. The Western Journal of Black Studies, 20, 89-95.

Clark, M.L., Beckett, J., Wells, M., & Dungee-Anderson, D. (1994). Courtship violence among african american college students. Journal of Black Psychology,20, 264-281.

Cothran, D.J., & Ennis, C.D. (1997). Students' and teachers' perceptions of conflict and power. Teaching and Teacher Education, 13, 541-553.

Cotten, N.U., Resnick, J., Browne, D.C., Martin, S.L., McCarraher, D.R., & Woods J. (1994). Aggression and fighting behavior among african-american adolescents: Individual and family factors. American Journal of Public Health, 84, 618-622.

Davis, L.G. (1990). Trends in themes of african american family research 1939-1989: A synopsis. The Western Journal of Black Studies, 14, 191-195.

Dryfoos, J.G. (1990). Adolescents at risk: Prevalence and prevention. New York: Oxford University Press.

Farrell, A.D., & Bruce, S.E. (1997). Impact of exposure to community violence on violent behavior and emotional distress among urban adolescents. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 26, 2-14.

Fink, E.L. (1990). Dynamic social impact theory and the study of human communication. Journal of Communication, 46, 4-12.

Fodor, I. (1992). Assertiveness and social skills training: Clinical overview. In I. Fodor (Ed.), Assertiveness and social skills training: A clinical handbook (pp.10-18). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Grossman, F.K., Beinashowitz, J., Anderson, L., Sakurai, M., Finnin, L., & Flaherty, M. (1992). Risk and resilience in young adolescents. Journal of Youth and Adolescents, 21, 529-550.

Hall, W.N., & Bracken, B.A. (1996). Relationship between maternal parenting styles and african american and white adolescents' interpersonal relationships. School Psychology International, 17, 253-267.

Haynie, D.L., Walters, S.R., & Alexander, C. (1997). Considering a decision-making approach to youth violence prevention programs. Journal of School Health, 67, 165-170.

(1996). Is youth violence just another fact of life? Some kids resilient: Some kids at risk. Clarifying the debate: Psychology examines the issues Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 411 331)

Jordan, W.J., Lara, J., & McPartland, J.M. (1994). Exploring the complexity of early dropout causal structures The Johns Hopkins University: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 375 227)

Kane, C.M. (1994). Differences in the manifest dream content of anglo-american, mexican-american, and african-american college woman. Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 22, 203-209.

Knox, T. (1992). A framework for understanding high risk black adolescents' social interactive issues. In I. Fodor (Ed.), Assertiveness and social skills training: A clinical handbook (pp.88-96). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Ollech, D. (1992). Anger control for adolescents: Review of social skills and cognitive behavioral interventions. In I. Fodor (Ed.), Assertiveness and social skills training: A clinical handbook (pp. 152-154). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Patterson, C.J., Kupersmidt, J.B., & Vaden, N.A. (1990). Income level, gender, ethnicity, and household composition as predictors of children's school-based competence. Child Development,61, 485-494.

Rotherman-Borus, M.J., & Wyche, K.F. (1994). Ethnic differences in identity development in the united states. In S.L. Archer (Ed.), Interventions For Adolescent Identity Development (p. 65). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

St. George, D.M.M., & Thomas, S.B. (1997).. Percieived risk of fighting and actual fighting behavior among middle school students. Journal of School Health, 67, 178-181.

Stevens, J.W. (1997). African american female adolescent identity development: A three dimensional perspective. Child Welfare, 76, 145-172.

Vardi, D. (1992). Assertiveness training for pregnant and parenting high school teenagers. In I. Fodor (Ed.), Assertiveness and social skills training: A clinical handbook

(pp.255-257). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Wakefield, W., Smith, T., DeMorat, M., Britsch, B., Hudley, C., & Cho, S. (1997). Perceptions of aggressive behavior: A look across grade, sex, and school (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 408 075)

Ward, J.V. (1995). Cultivating a morality of care in african-american adolescents: A culture-based model of violence prevention. Harvard Educational Review, 65, 175-187.

Weiler, J. (1997). Career development for african american and latina females. ERIC Digest #125 New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 410 369)

Westfall, A., & Pisapia, J. (1994). Students who defy the odds: A study of resilient at-risk students, Research brief #18 Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 411 342)

Yee, B.W.K. (1990). Gender and family issues in minority groups. Generations: Gender and Aging, 14, 39-42.

# APPENDIX A

## PHENOMENAL FEMALES GROUP

## PROFILE SHEET

_____HIGH SCHOOL
PHENOMENAL FEMALES GROUP
PROFILE SHEET

*Name* _____

*Address* _____

*Phone Number* _____

*Children, Ages and Names (if any)* _____

*Special Strengths* _____

*Activities You Enjoy* _____

*Reason for Attending NPHS* _____

*What Might You Want To Let Your Teachers Know About You?* _____

_____

*Career Interests* _____

# APPENDIX B

## SMALL GROUP GUIDANCE CURRICULUM

Phenomenal Females
Feminine Empowerment for High School Students

*Purpose* - The purpose of this group, Phenomenal Females, is to empower females to make good decisions. The activities are particularly designed for females who are behaving in a confrontational manner toward peers or for females who may have low self esteem as suggested by a discrepancy between performance and ability (their grades being lower than their standardized test scores). The poor self esteem may have as evidence poor attendance, high failure rate, potential drop out, or low socio-economic level.

Session 1

Materials Needed - Pen, paper, index cards

There are two different methods that can be used to facilitate this session. 1.) All students can write the activities down on a sheet of paper or 2.) Group members can discuss and elect a group member to serve as the secretary recording the activities for the group.

1. Ask students to discuss differences between males and females and chart these differences.
Example - Females are more concerned about their physical appearance.

2. Make a list of positive female role models either past or present. Example - Oprah Winfrey.
Discuss why these people are positive role models.

3. What advantages are there to being a female?
(Make note of any disadvantages cited to use later).

*Activity*
Empowerment Card

Take an index card and write down a compliment about the person to your right side.
NOTE: The compliment has to be something that is the female not a material, exterior quality.
Example - no 1. "You have on really cute shoes."
yes 2. "You have a nice smile."
Then sign your name to the card and give it to the female beside you. All group members should keep the card in their purse and carry it around until the next session. When having a bad day, pull the card out and read it. If you are about to lose your temper, read the card.

*Closure and Process Question for next group meeting*
1. What did you learn about yourself?
2. What makes you unique?
3. How are you like others in the group?

Session 2

Materials Needed - Paper, pen, small notebook or memo pad.

Check journals/logs to assist the group members' progress. Have them discuss an accomplishment during the week and a stress reducer used.

Empowerment Log and Journal

Keep a small STENOGRAPHER'S NOTEBOOK or a homework assignment notebook in your purse at all times.
Each day write:
1. Something I did well today. Example - Made a better grade in Algebra class or helped my mother clean the house.

2. A stress reducer - Something you did to relieve stress. Example - Read a book to my child or cooked my favorite food.

*Activity*
Stress Busters

Take your notebook or a daily organizer and write your stress reducer on that day's date. Share ways of relaxing and calming yourself when you are frustrated with group members.

Write the day of the week and the date. Each day has its own page. You should come to the next group meeting with seven different ways to relieve stress; one for each day of the week and seven accomplishments. We will use these "Stress Buster" later in the group meetings to make a "Stress Buster" calendar. We will use the accomplishments to chart our growth.

*Closure and Process Questions*
1. How can you tell when you are feeling stressed or worried about something?
2. Are our feelings like others in this group? How?
3. Are our feelings different? How?
4. Have you learned a new way to handle stress today? What is it? How will it work for you?

Session 3

Check journals/logs and see how group members are progressing. Spend a few moments verbally discussing this, for many of the group members may be relieving stress but they do not know how to identify it. Ask each student to identify her favorite stress reliever and accomplishment.

Relationship Pitfalls

*"You do not have to have someone to be someone."*

Say this out loud and listen to yourself.

Discuss the meaning behind these two quotes:

1. " Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the truly great make you feel that you, too, can become great." -Mark Twain

Ask students to give examples in their own lives and how these situations made them feel (have students interact after each statement).

2. "Many women today feel a sadness we cannot name. Though we accomplish much of what we set out to do, we sense that something in missing in our lives and-fruitlessly-search 'out there' for the answers. What's often wrong is that we are disconnected from an authentic sense of self." -Emily Hancock

Again, ask students to give examples in their own lives and how these situations made them feel.

*Activity*

Discuss the following four behaviors of abuse and a scenario for each behavior.

1. **Manipulate** - Your boyfriend charmed you at first then once he has you "hooked" (once you have committed yourself emotionally), he changes and persuades you to do things you may not want to do.

Discuss a scenario as a group or use the one provided.

Your boyfriend says, "You are so beautiful. Don't wear that dress to school. I do not want other guys looking to you when I am not around and you are at school."

2. **Blame** - He is responsible for his actions just as you are responsible for yours. His actions are not your fault.

Discuss a scenario as a group or use the one provided.

Session 3

Your boyfriend says, "It is your fault I cheated on you. You should have called me when I told you to."

3. **Belittle or abuse** - Belittle means to degrade someone or make someone feel small. If he does not accept all your qualities, good and bad, he does not accept you.

Discuss a scenario as a group or use the one provided.
Your boyfriend says, "No one else will have you because you are so moody.
You're lucky to be with me."

4. **Control** - All of the above can also be examples of control. You can only control yourself not others. Humans are not possessions or objects; they are people who have a right to make their own decisions.

Discuss a scenario as a group or use the one provided.
Your boyfriend says, "I saw you talking to him in the hallway."

*Process Question*
1. Remember a time when you blamed, controlled, manipulated, or belittled someone. What was the outcome of that situation?
2. Remember a time when you wanted to blame, control, manipulate, or belittle someone but stopped yourself before you said it. Did things work out better because you did not act in a negative way?
3. How would you handle the situation now? Why the change?
4. What have you learned today?

Discuss the "Kemba Smith" story if appropriate. Refer students to the "Kemba Smith Justice Page" web page on the internet, kembasmith@hotmail.com . Many females have heard the true story of a young lady from Richmond who attended Hampton University. She was overweight and shy. A male who did not attend college and was very popular at HU parties started to pay attention to her. He was a drug dealer and she was so naive that she did not know it. She ended up assisting him in his dealings while being verbally and physically abused by him. Now, he is dead and she is serving 25.4 years in prison as a first time offender.

Counselor's Note: This discussion can be a separate session. You may use this to introduce the six week session or possibly use this piece in a large group format.

Session 4

Check journals/logs to assist the group members' progress. Have them discuss an accomplishment during the week and a stress reducer used.

Communication without confrontation

Remember it is not what you say but how you say it. Women are usually verbal. Use it as a strength and be positive.

Confrontational Behavior

Staring
Moaning
Intentionally bumping your purse into someone in a crowded hallway
Making a comment to a friend but making sure it is loud enough for the other person to hear
Other examples?

Empowering Communication

- Goal - One on One communication
- Timing is everything - If a lot of people are around, do not choose this time to talk or confront someone. Discuss these personal issues in private.
- Be aware of your body language and facial expressions. Remember all people are reactive and will give back to you what you give (attitude)
- Make certain of your surroundings. Are others around you listening or waiting to confront or attack you?
- Talk softly and slowly to someone
- Control - If you are angry, force yourself to "sleep on it" and rethink your plan for communication. Emotions precede logic and reason - let the emotions die down.

*Activity*

Role play an example of empowering communication.
An example could be watching body language and facial expressions when the student approaches someone.

*Process Questions*

1. When you act confrontationally, does it change the outcome of the problem (will your boyfriend stop calling her if you approach her)? If confrontation does not change the outcome, is it a solution to the problem?
2. Share one empowering communication strategy you will use in the future and explain why it will be useful.
3. Why is empowering communication important?

Session 5

Check journals/logs to assist the group members' progress.

*Activity*

Role Play Confrontation Behavior

Role playing will be the activity for this session. Before the role play, discuss instances in which the students have been confronted by other females and possibly when they have confronted other females. Some confrontational behaviors are walking past another female in the hallway and making a negative comment about her, bumping into someone, or third party communication. Some communication without confrontation (Session 4) behaviors can be avoidance, speaking calmly, or (if you view the female as unapproachable) write her a letter clarifying the miscommunication that has occurred.

Role Play Scenario

A female walks past you and makes a remark. "You think that you are so together. You know he does not like you anyway. Nobody wants to be with you, you are nothing."
How would you react? Role play this behavior with the group.

How can you avoid someone being confrontational to you?

- Again, know your surroundings. Do not put yourself in a position where you can be confronted by more than one person.
- If another female is confrontational, wait until she finishes her communication then calmly say "Listen to yourself." (Role play the scenario if you wish) She may stop and think instead of acting negatively. Remember, people will not think you are a fool because you do not react in a confrontational manner. You may be the one people view positively and they may view the other aggressive female negatively. THINK IT THROUGH!
- If someone tells you that another female has been talking about you, it is important to think about the person who is telling you and the person who allegedly said something about you. If either female has a reputation of not being honest, consider the source. Some people may use you to create chaos and drama in the school. Acting on negative communication can embarrass you more than the communication itself.

*Process Question*

1. Anger takes energy. Where would your energy be better spent? On whom?
2. What avoidance strategy do you agree to use? Why ? How can the group keep you?

Session 6

Revisit Journals

1. Think back to our first meeting with empowerment cards when students gave compliments to one another. Choose six (or however many group members there are) categories and vote for which members should get which award. Awards must be internal not external.

Example No - Best dressed
Yes - Best All-Around
Most Improved
Best Outlook on Life
Best Attitude

Make certificates for each other.

2. Look back at journals. Create a Destressor Calendar using the "Stress Busters" from your journals. Each day during the 6-week session should have the date and choose a stress buster. As a group, go through each other's stress relievers. Each day during the 6-week session should have the date and choose a stress buster. Choose the one which works best for you.

Example February 3 Think of a good memory about you and a friend in elementary school

February 4 Intentionally stop whatever you are doing. Fill your lungs with air for 5 seconds and breathe it out for 5 seconds.

At the very least, the calendar should have 32 days (and that is if all group members have the same destressors). At the most, the calendar should have 192 days (if each group member has 32 different destressors). Accomplishments should also be added to the calendar. Add to the calendar each time you have a different group of females. You would probably have enough for a yearly calendar after three of four different groups. Share the completed calendar after it has been completed with group members from each group.

*Activity*
Videotape role play behaviors on communication without confrontation from Session 5. Have one of the students introduce the purpose of the role play. This videotape will be used for future groups or for the morning announcements or the beginning of an assembly.

*Activity*
Have group members make posters about empowering communication to put up in the hallways.

# APPENDIX C

## STUDENT ANGER SCALE

***Student Anger Scale***

Directions - By using the scale below, indicate your personal experiences with anger, the frequency in which anger overcomes you, and your ability to manage anger by marking -

**1 - N Never**
**2 - O Once or Twice**
**3 - F A Few Times**
**4 - M Many Times**

**Note: The words" confrontation" and "aggression" can apply to both forms, verbal and physical.**

| | N | O | F | M |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Have you ever confronted another female aggressively about a boyfriend? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Have you ever confronted another female aggressively because you thought she talked about you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. Have you ever been confronted aggressively by another female about spreading rumors? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Have you ever been confronted by another female aggressively about a boyfriend? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Have you ever been physically aggressive towards another female? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Have you ever been in a physical confrontation with a boyfriend? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Have you ever tried to resolve a conflict without being confrontational (verbal or physical)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. Has a conflict ever affected your school performance? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Has a conflict ever affected your attendance in school? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. Have you ever considered dropping out of school because of a stressful or confrontational event? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

# APPENDIX D

# TEACHER INSERVICES

**Teacher Inservice - Confrontational Behavior**

*First Session*

Many teachers and students have a conflict of interest in the classroom. Teachers will dissect the behavior of the confrontational students to identify certain behaviors and the rationale for those actions. Instruction will be compromised if teachers do not meet the needs of students both academically and socially.

*Underlying reasons why there may be a power conflict between teachers and students.*

- Some community members have witnessed such a struggle to obtain a job that pays more than a base salary with benefits. One of the reasons why teachers may have problems with students is that parents and students alike (especially low income parents and students) no longer equate success in school with economic success. Therefore, the student may view the teacher's authority as having little consequence or impact in the student's life.

- There is such diversity in the schools that many different cultures have very different beliefs about authority and its nature. For example, the European American culture has a natural authority for the teacher. They build the respect into the role of the teacher. Students from another culture may believe that the authority a teacher has must be earned and not automatically given. They are taught that nothing is given and everything including authority and respect is only given through hard work.

- Many students perceive educational goals as less important than social goals in the school. The teacher represents the educational aspects of school that they may not hold in as great of light as the social aspect. So, they do not hold the teachers in high regard unless they are meeting the social needs of the students as well as the academic needs.

- Teachers value class order more than educational goals.

*Student strategies used to control classroom instruction.*

- Students may not have the power over content in the classroom but they have the power to control the pace of the class. Examples of student control include asking the same questions repeatedly again or asking the teachers to repeat directions if the instructional content is something that is not of interest to them.

- Other student strategies used to affect and influence the control of the class are personality power which is when a popular or verbal student persuades other students to support him or her in efforts to "battle" the teacher, disruption, irrelevant discussions, or non-participation.

- Sometimes teachers will comply with students to keep order in the class. It is thought that the administration in some schools encourages classroom management ahead of instruction. As a result, the instruction will not be at a level it should be.

*Solutions*

1. The curriculum must be culturally diverse. Students may not be resisting authority but resisting a curriculum which does not address or value their heritage.

2. The curriculum needs to have a level of relevance and self-worth for the students so the power struggle can end in a "win-win" situation.

Understand the meaning behind the confrontational behavior of students and it will be easier to avoid these behaviors or have an intervention in place. It is possible for students and teachers to negotiate so that both parties can have their values and goals met.

**Reference**

Cothran, D.J., & Ennis, C.D. (1997). Students' and teachers' perceptions of conflict and power. Teaching and Teacher Education, 13, 541-553.

This journal article is available in the guidance office.

**Teacher Inservice - Comparing African American Females to Other Ethnic Groups**
*Second Session*

In order to adequately assist the African American female population, the school faculty must first determine the needs of the population. A starting point is to view how some African American females may view themselves.

*Self-Perceptions of African American females*

- African American females, more so than any other ethnic group, are concerned about their success or failure.
- Many African American females feel as if their career responsibilities are child care and manual labor. Few believe they have the potential to be engineers or doctors.
- The population is perceived to lack good judgment because they feel as if they do not have control over their own destiny. Therefore, they may create an "it does not matter what I do" attitude. Goals tend to be minimal.
- African American females consider themselves to lack power in society.
- The females feel as if they lack self control.
- They fail to view their interactions as positive ones.
- In a study of dream interpretation involving Hispanic, African American, and white college females, African American females dreamed of themselves in passive roles.
- According to their dreams, African American females compared to Hispanic or white females have more hostility because they feel they lack control over their fate.
- In their dream analysis, African American women had a higher rate of aggression and environmental pressure as compared to white and Hispanic women.

Research such as this reference will enable educators to better understand behaviors that are occurring in their classrooms. Additionally, teachers will be able to mentor, motivate, and assist African American females in their quest to break down these barriers of what some may see are feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

**Reference**

Kane, C.M. (1994, October). Differences in the manifest dream content of anglo-american, mexican american, and african american college women. American Counseling Association, 22, 203-209.

**Teacher Inservice - Differences in Gender**

*Third Session*

Most teachers understand that males and females process instructional material differently. However, most teachers do not understand the reasons and logic behind the difference in informational processing between the two genders. Once teachers are made aware of the specific differences, they can develop strategies to assist the specific needs of each gender.

Farrell & Bruce (1997) stated that girls are more verbal and have a higher level of emotional distress than boys.

During instructional discussions, teachers need to be aware that females can dominate the discussions and often will try to get off the topic. Some females will try to bring in a social problem to the classroom discussion. Although the social dilemma may need to be addressed, the teacher needs to make sure that the students do not dominate the lesson by switching the subject and speaking about an irrelevant topic (irrelevant to the instructional curriculum). Additionally, teachers must find ways to involve males in the discussion so as to not lose their interests.

---

Stevens (1997) said females are more assertive and independent than males. Young teen mothers especially learn independence early as they must often stay home with their children instead of attending school.

Teachers can take this opportunity to have females in leadership positions in class or in collaborative group activities. As for the attendance issue with young mothers, teachers can provide support by soliciting assistance from local agencies for child care. Also, teachers can make phone contacts to the home encouraging those females to seek assistance from social services and other agencies. The point being the teacher is taking a personal interest in the student.

---

According to Bieri & Bingham (1994) in "A working curriculum for gender roles," females are more influenced by approval than males. Many feel as if they are less important than males.

It will become imperative for teachers to bring guests into the classroom and get females involved with mentors, special projects, and guest speakers to increase their self perceptions and self esteem.

## References

Bieri, K.G., & Bingham, M. (1994). A working curriculum for gender roles. In S.L. Archer (Ed.), Interventions For Adolescent Identity Development (pp.141-154). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Farrell, A.D., & Bruce, S.E. (1997). Impact of exposure to community violence on violent behavior and emotional distress among urban adolescents. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 26, 2-14.

Stevens, J.W. (1997). African american female adolescent identity development: A three dimensional perspective. Child Welfare, 76, 145-172.

**Teacher Inservice - Instructional Strategies Used for Social Dilemmas**
*Fourth Session*

Teachers are expected to do so much more than teach. They must now be counselors, liaisons, and support systems for their students. If the emotional needs of the students are not met, the instructional process and progress will be impeded.

According to Patterson, Kupersmidt, & Vaden (1990), girls have more trouble adjusting during adolescence than boys.

Teachers can provide students especially females with support like in the form of tutoring.

---

Yee (1990) said females are under stress. They must provide the social strength and economic support for their families.

The school faculty should provide opportunities for career exploration. Also, stress reducers such as journal writing and creative writing across any discipline can be worked into the instructional curriculum.

---

Clark, Beckett, Wells, & Dungee-Anderson (1994) stated that females use more violence on males than males use on females. However, males rarely report female violence used on them because of the social stigma. Violence occurs when either the boy or the girl cannot control the others' behavior.

Teachers could have students research domestic violence on the internet to obtain information. Then, the students can demonstrate their knowledge on the subject by having mock trials and/or skits (or other forms of role play) in the classroom. Also, the teachers can team teach and perform these skits at assemblies so the entire school population can become more aware of violence issues.

---

According to Knox (1992) in "A framework for understanding high risk black adolescents' social interactive issues," part of black communication is humor. African Americans joke each other in preparation for negative comments they will hear in mainstream society.

Again, teachers can use different forms of writing and discussions across all subjects so they

students may have an avenue to voice their opinions and concerns. Teachers can tie issues into topics discussed in class. Math classes can discuss careers and money and science classes can compare people to the survival of the fittest syndrome in the animal kingdom (adaptive behaviors). Creativity is the key with this population. Lastly, teachers must realize that African American students may not be trying to monopolize class discussion by being the class clown. They may be doing what they know best. The school faculty must teach these students other coping mechanisms beside humor and hurting each other although humor has proven to be an effective means of dealing with societal ills such as racism.

**References**

Clark, M.L., Beckett, J., Wells, M., & Dungee-Anderson, D. (1994). Courtship violence among african american college students. Journal of Black Psychology, 20, 264-281.

Knox, T. (1992). A framework for understanding high risk black adolescents' social interactive issues. In I. Fodor (Ed.), Assertiveness and social skills training: A clinical handbook (pp.88-96). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Patterson, C.J., Kupersmidt, J.B., & Vaden, N.A. (1990). Income level, gender, ethnicity, and household composition as predictors of children's school-based competence. Child Development, 61, 485-494.

Yee, B.W.K. (1990). Gender and family issues in minority groups. Generations: Gender and Aging, 14, 39-42.

# APPENDIX E

# TEACHER PERCEPTION SCALE

***Teacher Perception Scale***

Directions - By using the scale below, indicate how you feel about each statement concerning African American female behavior as well as other student behavior in your classroom by marking -

**1 - SA Strongly Agree**
**2 - A Agree**
**3- NS Not Sure**
**4 - D Disagree**
**5 - SD Strongly Disagree**

| | SA | A | NS | D | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Teaching African American females is more difficult than teaching African American males. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. African American females resist authority in the classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Females allow their social problems to interfere with their school performance. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Teachers have more disruptions in the classroom from females than males. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. During class discussion, African American females in your classroom seem like they are under a lot of stress from their home environment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Females are more difficult to teach than males. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Of physical, verbal, or emotional aggression, females in your class display verbal aggression the most. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Female confrontational behavior impedes academic instruction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Classroom attendance is affected by social dilemmas that the students are engaged in. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. School climate is affected by female confrontational behavior students are engaged in. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |